

ian target

## PAYMENTS BY KGB ONLY

### PIN-MONEY

PRIME betrayed his country's secrets to the Russians for virtual pin-money in world espionage terms.

In 14 years as a traitor he was only paid a total of just over £8,000.

British Intelligence sources point out that Prime's miserly rewards back up his story that he got sucked into the top stream of espionage activities for ideological reasons.

His biggest payment, £4,000, would appear to have been made on his last visit behind the Iron Curtain, to Potsdam, almost exactly a year ago, when he was closely questioned about top secret Allied activities.

#### £400 sweeteners

His other payments, if his account is to be believed, were rarely more than £600 or £700. His first "sweetener" in 1968 was a mere £400.

He was usually paid on his trips to the Eastern Bloc, but according to him, he also collected cash at secret hiding places, once near a lake in Esher, and another time at a pick up point near Banstead Station, Surrey.

### TRIPS ABROAD FOR MASTERS

PRIME, codenamed Rowlands by the Russians, was first recruited by the KGB in 1968, while he served in the RAF in Berlin.

He made regular trips behind the Iron Curtain for debriefing sessions, his last journey being to East Germany only a year ago.

In 1975, just after he had been briefed by his employers to receive fresh high security classification, he attended a series of meetings in Vienna when he passed over photographic copies of the top secret material.

#### Contact broken

It was on another of his trips to Vienna in May, 1976, that he was told that if he should ever wish to defect, he would be given a pension and the rank of colonel in the KGB.

Prime claims to have lost contact with the Russians after leaving GCHQ, but said he was contacted again in April, 1980 and asked to go to Vienna.

He took up the invitation, taking with him rolls of film of secret documents, and was treated to a three day stay on a Russian cruise ship on the Danube.

## Quiet 'loner' who enjoyed football and his family

By ALAN COPPS

THE public face of Geoffrey Prime was that of a quiet family man. He doted

on his three stepsons, aged 10, 14 and 15.

He enjoyed football matches and was something of an ace at crosswords.

His fascination with the Russian language and culture was obvious, but he rarely talked about politics and never discussed his work at GCHQ.

His taxi-driver colleagues called him a loner.

His home was a neat, modern detached house in a quiet lane behind one of Cheltenham's gracious crescents.

The front door of Laburnum Cottage in Pittville Crescent Lane, is the kind of modest facade behind which many secrets are stored in the Cotswold Spa, where at least one in 10 of the working population is employed at GCHQ.

In the years he lived there Prime made few close friends, but one man who got to know him better than most was fellow-driver Mr Glynn Priday, 52.

#### Computer tape

After Prime left GCHQ in 1977 he first worked for a company called Chelva, a firm which still has a contract to transport computer tape from the Cheltenham bases to various destinations.

When two years later a dozen Chelva drivers decided to set up their own company Prime and Mr Priday were among the leaders.

"We used him as a secretary, because we could pick his brains to write letters. He was very good with words," said Mr Priday. "There is no way he was a communist. He liked making money too much."

Prime put in a lot of work to help set up the co-operative called A 2 B taxis, but he did not socialise with the other members.

#### Chat and coffee

"The rest of the blokes would get out of their cars and come into the office for a chat and some coffee. But not Geoffrey, his car was his world. If he had to wait for another job he would wait in the car with a flask and his books."

"We knew he had worked at GCHQ and that he was an interpreter, he talked about having spent some time in Berlin. We thought he still did a bit of that work while working for us."

"He would often carry Russian newspapers and books around with him and he wrote in Russian and German."

Sometimes the taxi drivers at both companies were shaken when Prime would turn up for the night shift carrying along a large multi-wave band radio which he tuned to Radio Moscow. It was that radio that

appeared as an exhibit at the Old Bailey.

At other times he would ask for evenings off so he could drive to London for Russian films or other cultural events.

"He said he'd left GCHQ because of the pressure of work. He got fed up with going to the same place day after day. He said he liked the freedom of being a taxi driver."

Geoffrey Prime left A 2 B taxis after a dispute over plans to turn it into a limited company. In November 1981 he went to work for a German wine company based in Bristol.

The shock of Prime's arrest was as great for his family as for his former colleagues.

Prime was born on Feb. 21, 1938. His father, Mr George Prime was described as a copper wire drawer of Humble Bee Bank, Alton, near Stoke on Trent.

He has two brothers. Mr Vincent Prime, the younger, a council roadsweeper, who still lives near Stoke, has not seen Geoffrey for about 20 years. Mr George Prime, the second brother, is a joiner at Blythe Bridge, near Stoke. His sister lives in Uttrover, Staffs.

Geoffrey Prime went to the village church school until he was 14 and then to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Secondary School in Trent Vale, Stoke.

#### Language course

At 18 he entered national service with the RAF and was persuaded to make it his career. After serving in Kenya he was selected for a Russian language course at RAF Leuchars in Fife, where he also studied German.

He qualified from that course in May, 1961, and the following month was posted to classified work at RAF Gatow in West Berlin. In 1966 he was promoted to corporal and in 1968 to sergeant.

It was while he was in Berlin, shortly before he left the RAF that he made his contact with the Russians.

In 1969 he was married for the first time to Miss Helena Organ in London when he was described as a Linguist Officer (Foreign Office).

That marriage ended in divorce in 1975. The following year Prime was already working in Cheltenham for the Joint Technical Language Service, the official name for the translators' department at Oakley.

In 1976 he rented a room in Cirencester Road, Cheltenham and it was there that he met his present wife, then Mrs Rhona Hatchell, whose marriage was ending.

In 1977 Prime, now promoted to a section head, was married to Rhona and wholeheartedly adopted her family. Shortly afterwards Prime's career at GCHQ ended.

The Daily Telegraph, Thursday

## The Trade Covert Coat New Wool a distinct im

Made in Great Britain from this fawn Covert Coat tailored for the man. With all the meticulous detail that makes all t



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DEAL

# Repercussions of Prime's treachery may never be known

THE full scale of the damage Geoffrey Prime's treachery has done to Western intelligence will never be fully known.

But the "incalculable harm" of which the Lord Chief Justice spoke yesterday has possibly come closer to driving a rift between the United States and British intelligence services than any other known security leak.

For an enormous and vital proportion of all Western intelligence passes through GCHQ, which works in close co-operation with the American National Security Agency.

Mr Caspar Weinberger, American Secretary of Defence said the Cheltenham breach of Security was "serious but not catastrophic."

Privately at least one senior British official has said that the Prime case is nothing short of a "disaster" for the intelligence services.

The Americans are said to be angry that Britain has not yet provided a full assessment of the harm caused by Prime, although there have been assurances on this side of the Atlantic that Cheltenham is low thought clear of moles.

## Advanced translator

Prime worked his way up to the most senior rank of Advanced Linguist Specialist, and became a section head. His job was to transcribe and translate Soviet communications intercepted by both British and American satellites and ground stations around the world.

Much of the information arrives in code and has to be put through Cheltenham's huge and highly-sophisticated de-coding computers before reaching the hands of translators.

In his position, Prime would have been able to report to the Soviets not only which of their communications were being monitored, but his information would also reveal which of their codes had been broken.

In response, the Soviets could have done no things:

Shift the frequency or method of transmission to avoid interception, or

Transmit misleading information, thus giving Western agencies a false basis on which to plan further action.

## Codes changed

American officials have said that during the period that Prime was employed at GCHQ, several sources of electronic intelligence on Soviet military, economic and political developments were lost because Moscow changed communications methods or codes.

But in such cases it is impossible to tell exactly what prompted the change, so a full assessment of Prime's decade of deception could never be made.

One senior American official was quoted in the New York

By ALAN COPPES

Times as saying: "You can never tell for sure what led the Russians to change encryption systems or switch to different channels. It's what you don't know in a case like this that scares you most."

That view was echoed by one British expert who had been involved in security at Cheltenham. "Prime would know the targets and the means of listening, possibly even the base from where communications were being monitored. That information is invaluable to the Soviets."

## Crucial negotiations

When Prime's potential knowledge is set against the background of Western-Soviet relations during his time at GCHQ, the reasons for alarm are clear.

His career began at a time of extreme tension following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and lasted throughout the years of détente which included a series of crucial arms negotiations.

In drawing up negotiating positions at such conferences, the kind of intelligence gathered at Cheltenham would play a vital part—as it would in many other major foreign policy decisions on both sides of the Atlantic.

The talks which took place during Prime's employment included the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, the Helsinki conference on European Security and Cooperation with all its implications for human rights and economic collaboration, and the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks aimed at reducing the level of conventional weapons in Europe.

A report in the Washington Post last month said Prime was thought to have passed on to the Soviets the locations of all British and US nuclear warheads and the day-by-day armed readiness of every division deployed throughout the 13 NATO countries of Western Europe, Turkey and Greece.

That statement was attributed to American intelligence sources. But it was specifically denied at yesterday's trial as was the suggestion that his spying resulted in the death of Western agents.

His task was to deal with incoming traffic, and that alone would be extremely damaging.

However, great the damage done by Prime, the case is unlikely to affect the close working relationship between the American and British intelligence communities, although it

might make the Americans more circumspect in their personal dealings with British agents.

An American intelligence expert said the episode had not destroyed the trust and the valuable working relationship that had been built up over the years.

However, there is concern that publicity over the issue and rumours of a split between the two espionage services could become a hot political issue in the United States with some congressmen using it to urge that the CIA and the NSA should not share their most sensitive secrets with Britain.

Such pressure would cause some bitter feelings, but in the long run is unlikely to succeed.

For one thing, Cheltenham's specialised computers have the capacity to decode some information beyond the range of their American equivalents.

In addition, GCHQ has access to intercepts from some listening posts which the U.S. despite its satellite technology, would find difficult to replace.

The Senate Intelligence Committee was briefed on the case soon after Prime's arrest and is still trying to determine how serious the damage is.

But because of the laws which forbid publication of evidence in this country, the American public has until now been told far more about the implications of the case.

In July, following Prime's arrest, Mrs Thatcher made a brief statement in the Commons which gave only the barest details. She did say, however, that any security issues arising as a result would be referred to the Security Commission.

## Panel reconstituted

She also said it was impossible to say with absolute certainty whether any other people were likely to be charged. Further evidence would be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions in the normal way.

Several MPs on both sides of the House put down questions about security when the case first broke. But for one reason or another none was answered.

One comparatively minor change in the security procedure has however been linked with the case, mainly because of its timing last month just as the most alarming reports were coming out in America.

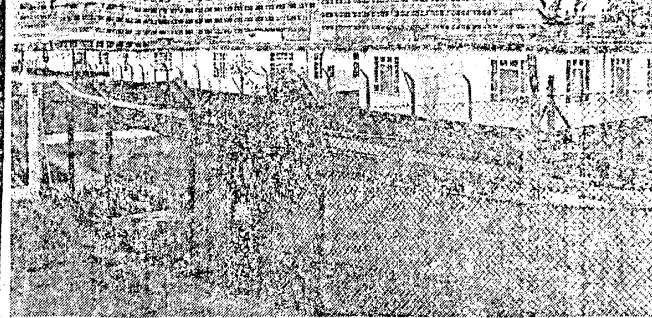
The three members of the Civil Service security appeals panel—Sir Richard Powell, 73, Sir Clifford Jarrett, 73, and Sir Richard Hayward, 72—were asked to resign.

Mr Justice Lloyd, 53, a High Court judge, was appointed as chairman and will serve with Sir Patrick Nairne, 61, Master of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and a former civil servant, and Mr Edward Hewlett, 61, formerly deputy general secretary of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants.

The panel's function is to advise on appeals by people who have failed "positive vetting" because a Minister believes there is some ground to doubt their reliability. It last considered a case in 1969.

The panel is a minor part of the security apparatus, but the change was seen as a gesture by Mrs Thatcher towards the Americans that everything possible to improve security was being done.





The Government communications headquarters at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

## How he slipped through the net

**GEOFFREY PRIME'S** incredible secret life was allowed to continue for 14 years because he twice survived positive vetting — the procedure designed to protect against infiltration.

When she makes her Commons statement on the case today Mrs Thatcher is certain to face the fiercest demands yet for a thorough review of the system.

Only earlier this year the latest security review reported that positive vetting had worked well over the past 30 years and recommended a reduction in the number of senior posts subject to the procedure.

Yet in his confession, Prime admitted that he first felt the psychological problems which led him to become a Soviet agent when he was serving with the RAF in Berlin.

Neither that feeling nor the fact that a sexual attack by a male relative during his unhappy childhood had left him with feelings of sexual inadequacy prevented him from passing the positive vetting procedure when he joined GCHQ in 1958.

Mr George Carman revealed at the Old Bailey that in 1972 while engaged on sensitive work in London, Prime suffered from severe depression and was referred by his doctor for treatment by a consultant psychiatrist.

### Sudden decision

Yet again in 1974 he passed positive vetting.

MPs will also want to know why no investigation was prompted by his sudden decision to quit GCHQ in 1977, just a year after being promoted to the rank of section head, in which he dealt with matters of the utmost secrecy.

A process of de-indoctrination and de-briefing is supposed to be standard procedure when such a senior employee leaves Cheltenham.

It was the psychological weakness and feeling of sexual inadequacy which first led him to make contact with his Soviet sympathisers and later to make the sexual attacks on little girls that brought about his downfall. Yet it is just such dangerous weaknesses that the vetting system was designed to show up.

Ministers are already considering whether the vetting system should be changed. This follows a report from Lord Bridge, chairman of the Security Commission, who inquired into the case of Commander Michael Trestall, the Queen's Police Officer, who resigned in July after admitting a relationship with a male prostitute.

That report, together with any recommended improvements, may be published later this month.

The vetting system at Cheltenham, as at any other civil service establishment works on two basic levels. The "normal vetting" applied to those dealing with information up to the "confidential" level relies principally upon the information an individual gives when first employed, backed by checks for criminal records and so on.

### Thorough check

But "positive vetting" applied to those such as Prime dealing with "secret" and "top secret" information is a much more thorough check. The individual will have an interview with a security officer, answer a long questionnaire about political views and out-of-hours activities, and have to provide two referees who will also be interviewed.

In addition, security officers may approach friends, neighbours and even the subject's family. The clearance of those subject to positive vetting should be reviewed every five years, although there is evidence that because of the number of staff employed at Cheltenham and a shortage of security officers it did not take place so frequently.

One former employee who served for more than 20 years could recall only two reviews during his service.

Ironically, since Prime's arrest the Civil Service Commission has advertised in this newspaper for security officers at GCHQ, offering a salary of £7,820 a year rising to nearly £10,000.

The advertisements stipulated that applicants should be

at least 40, have served in the police at the rank of detective inspector or above or have already been investigating officers in the Civil Service.

One former security officer at Cheltenham pointed out that however carefully this positive vetting procedure was followed, if an individual had a bizarre sexual taste, had never been caught in an illegal act and did not talk about his perversion to others, then there was no way he would show up as a risk.

Some intelligence experts argue that the introduction of psychological tests might be more reliable in showing up such potential risks.

But this would increase still further the time needed before a possible recruit was given clearance to work in a sensitive post.

As it is the current vetting procedure may take months and security officials admit that many potentially worthy recruits are lost because they become impatient and turn to other sources of employment.

The vetting and review system is reinforced by internal spying carried out by department heads who are briefed to check on employees who appear to have too much money, or appear to be short of cash through gambling or any other activity or who "show an excessive interest in members of the opposite sex."

This system was introduced in the 1970s to prevent "moles" developing.

But employees admit that because sections are small and loyalties between staff and department heads are strong such reports are rarely made. Instead, the heads are likely to make superficial checks and file routine reports to keep the security men happy.

An added complication is the tension which frequently manifests itself between the civilian boffins who run departments and the internal security men who are often ex-service or ex-police personnel, seen as authoritarian busybodies.

